

### Introduction

As requested by the Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne at a meeting with the Shire of Coolgardie and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder on 30 June 2025 concerning a potential boundary adjustment between the two local governments, this paper details the Shire of Coolgardie's position on the matter and options for a way forward.

It must be stated that while the Shire of Coolgardie Council accepts responsibility for the previous financial situation which has prompted the Minister's directive, a boundary adjustment was not the form of assistance or solution that the Shire was seeking from the Department.

The Shire of Coolgardie has made significant progress toward financial and organisational recovery in the 2024/25 financial year - and we feel strongly that we are able to maintain self-determination sustainably and responsibly, with support from the Department during this recovery phase.

The following outlines the Shire of Coolgardie Council Position and stance on the proposed Boundary Change/Amalgamation of the Shire of Coolgardie and the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

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### Shire of Coolgardie Position

That the Shire of Coolgardie **maintains its independence** and be **provided time to progress with its enacted plan** to return financial sustainability and organisational stability to the Shire. This is proposed to be achieved through the following steps:

- 1) Prepare a formal Financial Recovery Plan for the Minister to review and invite the Department to participate in the process and formation of the plan. This plan will provide a path for the Shire to follow (as was previously discussed by the Department, with Moore Australia engaged to undertake, similar, in April 2025). The plan would incorporate the following:
  - a) Include the recent alteration of rating categories.
  - b) Increase rate revenue for 2025/26.
  - c) Additional funding streams for road works confirmed from Storm Damage Claim (scope being confirmed now).
  - d) Staff re-structure.
  - e) Continuation of significant cost reductions across the organisation as previously advised.
  - f) Additional funding streams being realised in 25/26.
- 2) Complete the 2024/25 Financial Audit, which recognises the Shire's positive financial achievements during the seven months since the CEO's suspension in November 2024. This action is booked in with the Auditors RSM for early October 2025.
- 3) Undertake the tender process to dispose of the Bluebush Village asset which will bring about significant improvement in the Shire's debt ratio and enable significant cashflow increases by removing the debt burden and potential losses of the camp.
- 4) Continue to engage in discussions with Key Stakeholders, who have expressed strong interest in leasing and upgrading of the Kambalda Airport.
- 5) Report to the Department quarterly on the Shire's financial progress, with regular updates on key outcomes, and provide Budget Reviews for the end of 31 December and 31 March periods.

- 6) Appoint an Independent Consultant to oversee Council decision-making and administration direction for the 2025/26 financial year and restore confidence within the Community and Ratepayers.
  - 7) Enter into open discussions with the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder regarding the Joint Development of Key Projects, as the City has key interests in each of the following:
    - Mungari Estate Development
    - Coolgardie Waste Site conversion to a Regional Waste Site for Class 2 waste disposal
    - Kambalda Bluebush Village
    - Development of Kambalda Airport
    - Goldfield Records Storage Facility
  - 8) Should a Forced Amalgamation be the expressed intention of the Minister, the Shire will continue to explore its Legal Position on this matter and the use of Boundary Change legislation to enact a Forced Amalgamation.
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### Potential Amalgamation Position

That if the Shire of Coolgardie is required by the Minister to progress with the City **to explore the potential of a joint submission for an Amalgamation of the two Local Governments**, this would involve serious consideration and negotiation by both organisations for a significant number of key issues, outlined (but not limited to) below. It should be noted that it is the Shire's position that this is not the intent of the Boundary Change Provision and should be referred to as an Amalgamation and, as such, follow the requirements of the Act and Regulations if this was to occur.

In addition, appropriate due diligence and risk assessment, as well as seeking community input and consultation (via survey, calling for public submissions or a poll, as per the provisions of the Local Government Act) will need to be undertaken prior to any formal proposal to the LGAB.

- 1) **Representation of allocated seats on the new entity Council**
  - Consideration for Council meetings in Kambalda and Coolgardie for a certain number of times per annum.
  - What commitment/presence will the City's elected members and Shire of Coolgardie representatives have on the new entity?
- 2) **Name of new entity**

How will the new entity recognise the Shire of Coolgardie within its name, given the importance of its history, identity and culture within the Goldfields community?
- 3) **Strategic planning assessment and combined funding allocation**
  - The Strategic Community Plan, Corporate Business Plan and Workforce Plan need to be considered and discussed as to how the new entity will be formed to recognise the agreed project, program and service delivery actions for the Shire of Coolgardie.
  - What level of the rates expenditure from the new entity will be committed to be returned to the Shire of Coolgardie area into the future?
  - Reviews of current status of key assets.
  - Fees and charges' impact on service provision, especially to NFPs and community groups etc.
- 4) **Consideration for service delivery commitments for a minimum of 5 years**
  - Existing GP service in Kambalda through St Johns at 1 x full time GP and medical centre provision.
  - Community Assisted Transport provision in Kambalda.
  - Library in Coolgardie and Kambalda provision.
  - CRCs in Coolgardie and Kambalda provision.

- Provision of gym access to Coolgardie and Kambalda.
- Tourist facilities provided in Coolgardie and Kambalda.
- Short stay caravan sites Kambalda and Coolgardie.
- Support of community groups through Community Chest funding application processes.
- Arts, cultural and sporting community group commitment and support.
- Continuation of service provision from the Coolgardie and Kambalda Administrative Centres.
- Fire Brigades and Ambulance Services.
- Meals on Wheels service in both Coolgardie and Kambalda.
- School Breakfast Club.
- Youth facility in Kambalda as committed.
- Work placement program with Kambalda West District High School.
- Women's Health Clinic.
- Head Space.
- MEEDAC, Judumul, Men's Shed etc.
- School holiday programs and staff day care service.

**5) Ensure preservation of iconic community events and activities**

- Kambalda Community Christmas Tree
- Coolgardie Day
- Rodeo
- Community movie nights
- Kambalda Train

**6) Community engagement of new entity**

- Proximity to the City will be a challenge in facilitating activities and events.
- Providing community information and engagement to all residents.
- Not all residents in the Shire have access to internet or even notice boards.

**7) Commitment to facility maintenance and provision**

- Coolgardie and Kambalda Recreation Centres:
  - Provision of gym equipment at both sites
  - 2 indoor courts in Kambalda
  - 1 Indoor court in Coolgardie
  - CRC and library space at both sites
- Swimming pools in Coolgardie (significant work required and near-future upgrade required for the 25m pool) and Kambalda (50m pool and infant pool).
- Playground equipment and provision at both sites.
- Administrative Offices in Coolgardie and Kambalda.
- Connie's Café (Kambalda Recreation Centre).
- Pool kiosks.
- Kambalda football oval.
- Tourist facilities and historical item preservation, held in care by the Shire and community (eg, Coolgardie Museum, Warden Finnerty's House).
- Oval open space provision at Coolgardie and Kambalda East.
- Kambalda Waste Site ongoing provision (long term contaminated waste issue needing to be resolved).
- Coolgardie Waste Site continued provision.
- Coolgardie Wastewater Sewerage System and treatment ponds.

- Emergency Service Centres.
- Continuation of footpath repair and development program that the Shire has been progressing through.
- Kambalda Airport maintenance and upgrade.

#### **8) Preservation of Shire of Coolgardie Council historical items and content in Shire owned or leased Buildings**

- The Shire has an extensive collection of historical items on display in the Museum and further extensive catalogued items.
- Historical items from the Shire Council is extensive and must be preserved.
- Significant Indigenous history.
- Significant mining and prospecting history.

#### **9) Staff commitments and assurance**

- Staff are continued to be employed in their roles until a potential merger date.
- Organisational structure review undertaken prior to submission and merger.
- Staff then be provided with ongoing employment, at their place of current working, on the agreed conditions of pay etc for a period of a minimum of 2 years.
- Should an employee be requested to consider alternative employment duties, the employee does not lose pay or conditions and they are not required to relocate their place of employment unless mutually agreed.
- The Shire liaises with the City as to any vacant positions that require filling during the holding over period.
- Staff that have a contract expiring be afforded the opportunity to enter into a short-term contract to take them past the holding over period by 12 months to enable the new entity to properly consider the employment requirements, duties, numbers and locations.
- Ongoing provision of Shire housing for Senior Staff in Coolgardie and Kambalda.
- Provision of Shire Care for staff children during school holidays.

#### **10) Road network requirements**

- Road User Agreements in place.
- Haulage Campaigns.
- Maintenance agreements.
- Contracted road maintenance.
- Regional Road Group committed projects.
- Roads to Recovery projects.
- Further reduction in potential funding for the new entity if the changes to the Regional Road Group continue.
- DFES funding for storm damage from March 2024 – being finalised now.
- Continuation of the use of the depots in Coolgardie and Kambalda
- Bayley Street upgrade from electoral promise.

#### **11) Contracts of service etc**

- Cleanaway contract
- Sirrom Facility Management at Blue Bush Village
- Waste disposal agreements/contracts
- Acceptance of Waste from Esperance
- Records Storage Facility
- Buy Local Policy to support Local Businesses
- Contracts, Agreements and Leases for use of spaces/offices in these buildings.

#### **12) What commitment is provided for the Shire of Coolgardie residents from a Boundary Change**

- Will the State or the City commit to funding the refurbishment of the Coolgardie pool?
- Will the State or the City commit to resolving the contaminated waste issue in Kambalda (even though this will become the City's problem)?
- Continuation of the grant to build new Aged Units in Kambalda.
- Continuation of the grant to refurbish the units in Coolgardie.
- Completion of the 3 GROH units at Goodenia Court, Kambalda.
- Commitment to install emergency generators at the Coolgardie and Kambalda Rec Centres to facilitate evacuations and emergency incidents.
- Will the City provide a bus/transport service to support community access to services if removed from Coolgardie and Kambalda?
- Continued development of the Horse Blocks in Coolgardie and commercial land in Coolgardie.
- City understanding and position of mining exploration etc within the Coolgardie Shire communities and impacts on residents and facilities.

#### 13) Current actions of the Shire of Coolgardie underway

- Proposed disposal of Blue Bush Village.
- Proposed lease of the Airport to MRL.
- DFES funding from March 2025 storm event.
- Finalization of outstanding RRG funded road projects

#### 14) Once the above has been negotiated by the two Councils and an agreement in principle has been reached:

- Negotiate with State Government regarding incentive to be provided to the new entity:
  - Cost of undertaking risk and due diligence assessments of the potential merger.
  - What incentive is to be provided to the new entity in funding over and above costs:-
    - Pay out debt.
    - Cost of rehabilitation of contamination at Kambalda.
    - Cost to develop upgraded Coolgardie Waste Facility into regional site.
    - Refurbishment of the Coolgardie Pool.
    - Kalgoorlie-Boulder items.

#### 15) Once the final outcomes of the above are committed then the Shire wishes to:

- Survey/consult with its community as to the proposal and the points of agreement or not.
- Assess the Audit findings from the 2024/25 financial year planned for October 2025.
- Assess the progression of the 2025/26 Budget and actions taken and projects completed.
- Assess the impact of the disposal of the Bluebush village on the Shire finances and loans.
- Assess the finalised financial position of the Shire of Coolgardie as at the 1 July 2026.

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## Conclusion

As has been presented, the Shire of Coolgardie's Position, as endorsed by Council, is to maintain its independent local government status and be allowed time to implement its Financial Recovery Plan in consultation with the Department.

The Shire has seriously considered its position, as can be seen with the options provided within this brief, and would invite the Department and/or Minister's Office to engage with the Shire Council and Administration to better understand the current financial status and actions that have been put in place for the Financial Recovery.

## **Position Paper for the Minister of Local Government**

### **Response re: Boundary Adjustment with City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder**

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As also detailed, the Shire's Position on a Potential Amalgamation with the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is not the Council's preferred option and, from early vocal indications, nor is it the Shire of Coolgardie's Community who are currently taking action into their own hands. However, if progressed would be required to be undertaken as per the Local Government Act and Regulations for an Amalgamation.

Again, Council accepts responsibility for the previous financial situation and Council are willing to take the required actions to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Shire of Coolgardie as an independent, strong and vibrant Local Government.